

Digest of a Performance Audit of the FACT Initiative and At-risk Programs

Utah's Legislature has, within the **Utah Code**, addressed a number of specific behavioral problems that can prevent a child from achieving the highest level of success in their education and life. This audit deals primarily with the initiative to bring families, agencies, and communities together for the common cause of addressing a child's problems, called the FACT Initiative, and the At-risk Programs created by the Legislature and assigned to the State Office of Education. The at-risk programs addressed by the **Utah Code** in this report include: gang prevention and intervention, pregnancy prevention, and general flow-through funding. Each of these programs has been reviewed from a compliance perspective, addressing whether or not each piece of legislation has been followed.

We found that there is strong support justifying each of these programs and that the statutes have included the relevant principles found in national research. We also found that state and local agencies are following the basic premise of these statutes. They have designed programs that are community-based and family-oriented as called for in the legislation and are working toward the ultimate goal of the relevant statute. While overall we have found the program to be applied in keeping with legislative intent, we also note some areas that can be improved. These improvements are mostly in the area of legislative intent clarification.

The following briefly describes the most significant areas reviewed for this report:

FACT Initiative is Operating as Planned. Utah's FACT Initiative has been designed to address the needs of children and their families with multiple problems that cannot be adequately address by any one individual agency. FACT is actually a number of programs that are collaborative, community-based, family-centered, comprehensive service delivery systems that are well defined in the **Utah Code**. We reviewed the two largest programs of FACT, site-based and Local Interagency Councils (LICs), and found that both follow legislative intent and address their targeted populations.

While following legislative intent, we also note that the FACT Initiative may need some fine tuning. The site-based program may be losing some of its intended early intervention effectiveness as the program expands to accept students with problems attending higher grades. This may cause a dilution of limited funds. The LIC program may have a growing agency participation problem in rural settings as LIC's place greater demands on agency staff and take them from existing agency workloads. There is also a question of LIC

liability created by the mixing of agency and non-agency members that may need to be addressed.

Utah's Gang Prevention and Intervention Programs Need Better Monitoring. Utah's school district gang prevention and intervention programs may need greater oversight from the State Office of Education (SOE) to ensure they follow legislative intent. The gang prevention and intervention statute found in the **Utah Code** is based on sound principles that have been found effective in addressing student gang involvement. Our review found that these programs vary from district to district and do not always follow the intent of the legislation.

The Legislature may wish to clarify some intent language to address the need for program evaluation, the type of program eligible to receive funding, and the population they want targeted by the legislation. Utah school districts have created several types of programs with some emphasizing prevention and other emphasizing intervention. There is a wide variety of students addressed by these differing programs.

Other At-risk Programs are Following Legislative Intent. Other at-risk programs reviewed for this report include pregnancy prevention and general flow-through funding. We found both of these programs to be in compliance with the **Utah Code**, addressing their areas as intended. Utah's pregnancy prevention programs are abstinence-based and address children in programs throughout the state with few problems. The Legislature may, however, wish to revise the statute to allow district to design programs based on the most effective tools rather than requiring adoption of entire programs. This would allow the use of all effective tools rather than only those in a pre-existing program. It may also be beneficial to address the level of funding provided by the current legislated formula as it appears some districts may have excess funding. We found no problems with the use of the at-risk flow through funds.